

Knowing the God of Light (1 John 2:3-11)

Water of Life

Dr. John Niemelä

September 24, 2015

INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN

Author = John the apostle

Date: sometime after AD 50, but not after the mid-60s

Readership: Leaders of a Local Church (likely Ephesus)

Consider 1 John 2:12-14:

2:12	little children (forgiven)	little children (know Father)	2:13c
2:13a	fathers (know God)	fathers (know God)	2:14a
2:13b	young men (overcomers)	young men (strong overcomers)	2:14b

These are three ways of looking at the same audience.

Purpose: Why is 1 John 5:13a often falsely claimed as the purpose statement?
At the end of book, like John 20:31. Insufficient reasoning.

What shows that 5:13a is not the book's purpose statement?
Points A-D (below)

What verse is both a paragraph's purpose and the book's purpose?
1:4 is purpose of 1:1-3 and of the book

- A. And **these things** (1 John 1:1-3) **we write to you** that our joy may be full. (1 John 1:4)
- B. My little children, **these things** (1 John 1:5-10) **I write to you**, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1)
- C. **These things** (1 John 2:18-25) **I have written to you** concerning those who try to deceive you. (1 John 2:26)
- D. **These things** (1 John 5:6-12) **I have written to you** who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

REVIEW OF EXPOSITION

Making sense of 1 John 1:1-3

"That which" is neuter. If John wished to refer to Jesus Christ, he would say "He who."

"We" is distinct from "you." Note 1:3, "We declare to you." This is not a subset.

We = the apostles (cf. John 21:24 and 1:14). You = mature church leaders in Ephesus.

¹ **The message of life** was from the beginning,

the message of life we [apostles] have heard,

the message of life we [apostles] have seen with our eyes,

the message of life we [apostles] looked upon, and our [apostles] hands have handled concerning the **message of life**—★

² and the life was manifested, and we [apostles] have seen and declare to you [readers] the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us [apostles]—★

³ **the message of life** we [apostles] have seen and have heard, we [apostles] declare to you [readers], in order that you [readers] also may have fellowship with us [apostles and with the Father and His Son].

John wrote 1:1-3 [and the whole book] so the original readers may enjoy the same fellowship that the apostles have with the Father and with His Son (1:4)

Issues related to all of 1:5-10

The purpose of these verses is to serve as a preventative for sin (per 1 John 2:1a)

Two Theses: God is without taint of sin, but people (even apostles) have the taint of sin

In light of 1:5, the apostles ought to affirm verse 7 (not verse 6) concerning fellowship.

In light of 1:5, the apostles ought to affirm verse 9 (not verses 8 or 10) concerning sin.

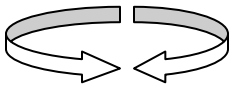
God is without any taint of sin (1:5)

The apostles would be liars and would not be doing the truth, if they claimed to have fellowship while walking in darkness (1:6)

The apostles have fellowship with God (and God has fellowship with the apostles) and Jesus Christ's work on the cross cleanses the apostles from all sin, if the apostles walk in the light (as God Himself walks in the light) (1:7)

The apostles would be deceiving themselves and would be without truth, if they claimed not to have sin (1:8)

The apostles would make God a liar, if they claimed not to sin (1:10)



I am dealing with verses 9 and 10 in reverse order. Verse 10 reinforces the statement of 1:8. (I want to end with verse 9).

God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse the apostles from all sin, if the apostles acknowledge their sin (1:9)

Forgiveness is not judicial. It is not the term for the once-for-all dealing with sin.

Propitiation (1 John 2:2, in the next paragraph) is the once-for-all dealing with sin.

John wrote 1:5-10 as a preventative measure against sin (2:1a)

The apostles [and believers] have an advocate (Jesus Christ the Righteous) if they sin (2:1b)

Jesus Christ [is an advocate] because He propitiated for the apostles' sins [and believers' sins] as well as for the sins of the whole world (2:2)

Propitiation is universal and actual: Thus sin is not an issue at the Great White Throne

Consider John 3:18 unbelievers are judged already (spiritually dead)

Consider John 5:24 believers receive eternal life w/o needing a judgment first

Consider 2 Cor 5:19-20 God no longer imputes sin to the world (unbelievers)

Consider Rev 20:11-15 Sin not mentioned. Works insufficient.

NEW EXPOSITION

Issues pertaining to 2:3-11: Since John wants the readers to enjoy fellowship with the Lord, he sets forth truths as they apply to the apostles (we, our, us) or to all believers.

Keeping His commands is how apostles perceive their [fellowship] knowing of Him (2:3)

Remember that John uses “we” for the apostles, so “knowing Him” is used in a fellowship sense, rather than in a relationship sense. In other words, it is possible for a believer (even an apostle) not to know Him (in a fellowship sense).

John’s readers [mature church leaders] already knew his Gospel. Cf. 1 John 2:7. Thus, it is appropriate to consider passages in John in their contexts. (I will establish that the Eleven were already believers prior to the Last Discourse: John 13–17, first).

The Eleven (including Thomas) were believers prior to the Last Discourse
John 13:10-11

John 15:1-3

So, what about John 20:27-29?

Some passages in John that are background for 1 John 2:3
John 14:15

John 14:23

John 15:16

Anyone claiming to know Him [in a fellowship sense] who ignores His commands lies and is without truth [in claiming this] (2:4)

The one who keeps His commandments is one in whom his love for God is matured (2:5a)

Clarifying the phrase, “love of God.” In grammar, we learn that a noun is a person, place, thing, or idea. Idea words are ones that are verbal in nature. In other words, they convert into verbs. For example:

LOVE converts into a verb: TO LOVE A FEAR converts into a verb: TO FEAR
KNOWLEDGE converts into: TO KNOW BELIEF converts into: TO BELIEVE

When *of* follows an idea word (like *love of _____*), it often creates an ambiguity.

Specifically, does love of God mean: *People’s love for God* or *God’s love for people*?

Consider this context (2:3-11) as well as 1 John 4:19 in context)

John is saying that obedience to God is the hallmark of maturing love for God.

A toddler (even a disobedient one) can love his/her parents, but an adult child can manifest mature love for parents by living in a way that honors his/her parents.

Verse 7 (and the book) will clarify which commandment John specifically addresses.

Obedience is how the apostles perceive that they are in Him [a fellowship sense] (5:5b)

“In Christ” terminology of Ephesians signifies *being a believer*. However, John uses this terminology in a fellowship sense. We must let Paul use terms in Paul’s way, John uses the term in his way. If we remember that “we” in 1 John means the apostles, it is not hard to recognize that John uses this phrase differently than Paul does.

The one claiming to abide in Christ ought to walk as Jesus did [in the light] (2:6)

John is directing our attention to 1 John 1:6-7, where he spoke of the apostle’s walk. He now applies this to the readers. The question is whether *just as He walked* refers to walking in the light or to sinless perfection. Jesus both walked in the light and walked sinlessly. But John tells us that not even the apostles walked in sinlessness (1:8-10). Based on that, how should we understand *just as He walked*?

John writes an old commandment that they have had since the beginning, rather than writing them a new commandment (2:7)

That commandment was that the apostles were to love one another (John 13:34)
What is the significance of John 13:34 in its context?

John wanted readers to enjoy the same fellowship with God that the apostles enjoyed.

That old commandment is a new one, though, because the [present] darkness is passing away and the true light already shines (2:8)

One claiming to be in the light who hates a brother (fellow-believer) is still in darkness (2:9)

Brother is used in this book for fellow-believer (cf. 2:7 in this context)

Hating one another (hating a fellow-believer) is incompatible with loving one another

John aims for them to have vertical and horizontal fellowship (1:3)

In 3 John, Diotrephes can be said to hate the apostles, refusing fellowship.
John does not hate Diotrephes, but light cannot fellowship with darkness.

One loving his brother abides in the light and no snare [for his brother] is in him (2:10)

One hating his brother walks aimlessly in blinding darkness [he snares himself] (2:11)

CONCLUSION